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A SURVEY OF THE RESOURCES AND ROLES OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

Universities are charged with the responsibilities of imparting knowledge and conducting research among other roles. They must therefore be equipped with relevant resources if they must meet challenges placed on them by academic activities. In this regard, this paper has surveyed the essence of university education and its history in Nigeria. The objectives of university libraries and their true characters are also under the purview of the paper. Further, the types of users and the roles the university libraries play are x-rayed. Based on the identified problems recommendations for giving the university libraries a befitting status are made. As education forms the bedrock of any national development the university education becomes central in national development and economic emancipation. In this regard the author recommends proper attention for the growth of university libraries

KEY WORDS

**University libraries, Library resources ,Library services,
Education and libraries**

Education forms the bed rock of every modern society. This is because the educational process is all about human and material development . Afonja (2011) states that the goal of education is to impart knowledge into people such that they will be armed with the necessary information to make them take advantage of the numerous opportunities available in the world. Section (9) of the National policy on Education (NPE,1981) buttresses the fact that education must continue to be highly rated in the national development plans

because education is the most important instrument of change. Also, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution.

This great importance attached to education engendered the establishment of the educational institutions from primary to tertiary level since 19th century in Nigeria. In 1948 the first university, the University of Ibadan came into existence to satisfy the educational and local manpower needs of Nigeria. Between 1948 and 1960, after this era Nigeria experienced a phenomenal growth in higher educational institutions as can be seen from the (NUC, Dec., 2018). By this figure Nigeria has 43 federal universities, 48 state universities, and 79 private universities giving the total of 170 universities in Nigeria.

. OBJECTIVES /GOALS OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

According to section 59 of national policy on Education the general goals /objectives of various universities are, to

- a) Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training ;
- b) Develop and inculcate proper values for survival of the individual and society ;
- c) Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;

- d) Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self reliant and useful members of the society ;
- e) Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- f) Promote national and international understanding.

In view of the above listed objectives, the universities find the university library as an essential instrument for the fulfillment of their goals. As a matter of expediency the university libraries in Nigeria are usually established with the following objectives identified by Ifidon and Ifidon(2009) :

- a) Stimulation of interest in information.
- b) Maintenance of external relationships and inter-library co-operation.
- c) Provision of materials for personal self development.
- d) Provision of expensive standard works in professional disciplines
- e) Provision of materials in support of faculty, external and collaborative researches.
- f) Provision of materials in support of postgraduate research.
- g) Provision of materials for undergraduate instruction, term papers and projects as well as for supplementary reading.

These objectives are fulfilled to supplement the major university objectives. Without the fulfillment, the universities cannot justify their existence. It therefore becomes very mandatory upon all universities to establish libraries in their domain to fulfill the stated objectives directed at teaching, learning and research.

MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Harrod (2000) defines a university library as library or group of libraries established, maintained and administered by a university to meet needs of its students, members of the academic staff and other members of the university community to effectively carry out their administrative and executive responsibilities. On the other hand, they are libraries found in universities and university colleges which store information based materials for advanced learning and research by its users ranging from that of undergraduates to doctorate degree students.

Reitz (2004) sees the university library as a library or library system established, administered and funded by a university to meet the information, research and curriculum needs of its student, faculty and staff . Aina (2004) also agrees that the university library can be organized on a functional approach, a subject approach, or on a hybrid approach of subject and functional approach for managerial purposes.

From the website of Lagos state university library ([www.Virginis.com /LASU/Nigeria /academic .pdf/library](http://www.Virginis.com/LASU/Nigeria/academic.pdf/library)) the attributes of a university library are clearly highlighted. The university library is usually headed/ by a university librarian who is responsible to the vice chancellor for the administration of the university library and co-ordination of all library services in the university. He is an academic staff who is in charge of all the academic research and administrative activities within the university library system.

Roles and Attributes of the University Library

The responsibilities of a university library include: selecting, acquiring and organizing books, periodicals, documents, newspapers, maps, digital database, audio-visual materials and other materials that will effectively assist learning, teaching, research and recreational activities of the university. By its functional character, the university library is regarded as “nerve centre”, the pivot, the heart or the core of the academic life of the university. All academic and non-academic activities revolve around the resources that are stocked and exploited by the university community for all academic and administrative endeavours. Basically, the university is established under the university law. Another set of attributes can be observed from Ifidon’s (1999) comparative study of African Universities. The general characteristics are spelt out in terms of universities offering courses in a variety of disciplines with student population ranging from 3000-23,000, book stock from 3,3000 to over four million volumes, and journal subscriptions from 910 to 14,000 titles. Further, Ifidon maintains that funding is usually drawn from public purse for public universities while technology has introduced computerization and sole users of the university are the staff, students and researchers. Aina (2004) in Whitaker (1993) in his categorization of users of library as an attribute of university library, states that there are general users, subject users, special readers and non-reading users. Narayana (1991) observes that the users are individuals and that statistically average value can be very misleading.

In his user analysis he recommends classifying groups and types of users into categories based on specific information needs. He thereby outlines the following as categories of users:

The potential internet access users in the university libraries.

- i. The user (one who has need)
- ii. The expected user (one who has intention)
- iii. The actual user (one who has used) ,

The beneficiary (one who derives value)

Ifidon and Ifidon (2008) state explicitly that patrons are the users who pose challenges to the staff that provide reference and information services and indicate the following as different categories of users:

- i Doctoral students
- ii Other post graduate student (masters and Pgd)
- iii Undergraduates
- iv Diploma students
- v Part time students including distance learning students.
- vi Lectures and other categories of teachers
- vii Researchers
- viii External users etc.

Further categorization is made on the basis of levels of usage. In this regard the users are known as –the fresh library user, the casual user the ordinary user and the researcher. ifidon (1999) conducted a study and found out that the different level of the library clientele comprise the undergraduates, the research group consisting of the teaching staff in the faculties, the post graduate students and other researchers those who want materials for their own personal self development, those who may seek information on the region within which the university is situated and external users who look forward to a network of academic library resources that are at their disposal.

Basically, the categories of users allowed by law to use the university library are: Members of the university council, All members of staff of university, All students of the university, Graduates and students conducting research, seminars and conferences, Any other person permitted by the university librarian.

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

According to onwubiko and uzoigwe (2004) library resources simply refer to the totality of information materials that form a library collection. The resources are acquired to satisfy the information needs of the library users and to realize the parent institutions goals. They argue that library resources are classified into two print and non- print materials the print material which are in form of books are also called monographs while the non-print materials are in the form of audio-visuals materials and electronic resources called multimedia resources. The library resources as itemized by onwubiko and uzoigwe (2004) include:

- i. Books/ Monographs-- encompassing novels, student projects, technical reports, reference materials etc.
- ii. Non –print materials including graphic materials, still pictures and still projected pictures, motion pictures, audio materials, three dimensional materials, radio, telephone, records, audiotapes etc.

In addition to the appreciation of library resources they provide a list of services the university library offers to the users as the following;

- i. Instruction on how to use the library
- ii. Provision of general and specific information.
- iii. Assisting the users in locating materials
- iv. Conducting literature advisory service
- v. Offering readers advisory service
- vi. Compilation of bibliographies, indexes and abstracts.
- vii. Reservation of documents
- viii. Carrying out inter- library loan services.
- ix. Holding library exhibition
- x. Maintaining files, chippings, pamphlets etc
- xi. Providing current awareness services, SDI

The dictionary for library and information science (2005) defines library resources as all the items purchased by a library or library system to satisfy the information needs of its users including books, newspaper and periodicals, reference materials, music scores, maps microforms and non-print media as distinct from equipment and supplies but also including subscription to electronic resources.

As no library can exist without the resources, Ifidon (2006) believes that it is absolutely essential for a library to possess the resources that will make it meet its goals and offer the necessary services. The human and material resources can only be appreciated if excellent services are given to users. He therefore states that services can be provided using the basic types of materials which include; Books (reference and non- reference materials) ,periodical these etc ,Special material (archival collections manuscripts, regional

collections, documents governmental and non-governmental, microform material vertical files and audio visual materials.

Edoka stresses that the entire information items in the library are acquired for the provision of general information as well as research service to the library users. In his argument, books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, patents, maps, engineering, drawing, bibliographies indexes, slides and all other information bearing materials are expected to be found in the library system.

His emphasis is on usage as the library has the responsibility to ensure that its resources and services are used to fulfill them. These services are outlined as the following ; information services , reference and lending services ,user education services ,Extension services ,Provision of guides ,notices display etc

With regard to rapid service Cassel (1999) sees the provision of electronic environment to library users as essential since they expect faster and efficient service. She states further that they also need a wide range of alternative customized service options, self service and universal accessibility and availability. In her view they want convenient, easy, continuous, service access and the power to decide when, where and how to obtain access to a library service as well as the power to determine the level of library service they should receive. This is because information resources come in different formats such as print format, CD Rom, online access, and the internet information resources to meet the differing needs of the users as well as grant them power of access at all times.

The World encyclopedia of library and information services (1993) while discussing the services of academic libraries points out that

delivery of services to users has developed to include not only those services provided in the library building but also those available to remote users accessing information sources through automated network channels and document delivery options.

: PROBLEMS FACING UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

University Libraries are generally confronted with diverse problems. Most university libraries are not properly planned from inception. The result is the haphazard way of providing services. More often than not libraries are situated on temporary sites with limited resources. The library buildings hardly ever accommodate the required number of users.

The problem of funding is not left out as the available funds for library services are not properly disbursed. We all are living witnesses to how the library TET-fund is being managed. Misappropriation or non-utilization has derailed the good intention of the government towards funding of libraries in Nigerian Universities. Lack of balanced patronage poses its own bottleneck problems in university libraries. Some students patronize the library service when extremely necessary or when compelled by circumstances like examination, assignments, lack of personal reading space etc. These situations do not justify the expenditures on library services. Some of the university libraries therefore provide services without reasonable returns. Vandalisation of library materials cannot be overlooked as a serious challenge

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Many Nigerian Universities have come of age. They therefore require befitting university libraries. For this to be realized establishment of libraries should be accorded priority. As the government is trying to provide adequate funding, efforts should be made to enforce proper utilization and allocation of funds to various arms of the university libraries. Motivational services such as current awareness services, selective dissemination of information service or regular provision of accession lists should be provided to attract users on regular basis. Sale of relevant books and binding or lamination services are necessary services that restore the confidence of the users in library services. There is also the need to expand the library as the need arises .Provision of relevant current information resources are necessary. Internet and on-line services are essential supplementary services which must be provided in every modern academic library.

CONCLUSION:

Library services are inseparable services in university educational system. They play crucial roles in the education of Nigerian students . They should therefore be accorded adequate attention.to enable them meet their objectives and face their challenges.

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